



No. 37

# ASHOKA

THE LIFE OF A GREAT SON OF INDIA, AS  
DEPICTED IN THE PALI TEXTS

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History chronicles innumerable kings who were brave conquerors and valiant soldiers. But Ashoka stands above them all because he is the only one who at the zenith of his conquests saw the futility of violence and had the courage to renounce it. That is why, H. G. Wells in his 'Short History of The World' says that Ashoka's "reign for eight and twenty years was one of the brightest interludes in the troubled history of mankind." Wells goes on to say, "Such was Ashoka, the greatest of kings. He was far in advance of his age."

This volume is based on the original research of the author into Mahavamsa, Dipavamsa, Commentary on Mahavamsa, and the edicts of Ashoka. Pali manuscripts and other secondary sources have also been extensively studied in gleaming facts which should kindle a new interest in Ashoka.

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# ASHOKA

ASHOKA WAS THE SON OF KING BINDUSARA WHO RULED INDIA FROM HIS CAPITAL OF PATALIPUTRA IN THE THIRD CENTURY B.C. HE EXCELLED HIS BROTHERS IN THE ART OF WAR. THEREFORE, WHEN A REBELLION BROKE OUT IN THE DISTANT PROVINCE OF TAXILA, HE WAS SENT TO SUPPRESS IT.



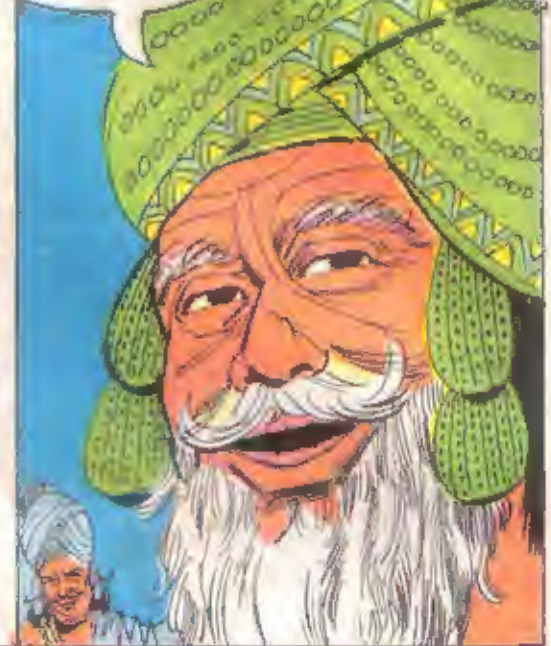


WEEKS LATER -

YOUR MAJESTY! WE HAVE  
HAPPY NEWS HERE. ASHOKA  
HAS SUCCESSFULLY  
PUT DOWN THE  
REBELS.



HE SHALL RULE  
THERE AS THE  
VICEROY. HE  
WILL KEEP  
PEACE  
THERE.



BINDUSARA HAD A HUNDRED SONS BESIDES ASHOKA. THEY WERE  
NOT HAPPY TO HEAR THE NEWS.

ASHOKA HAS  
ALWAYS BEEN  
PROUD. THE  
SUCCESS WILL  
GO TO HIS  
HEAD.

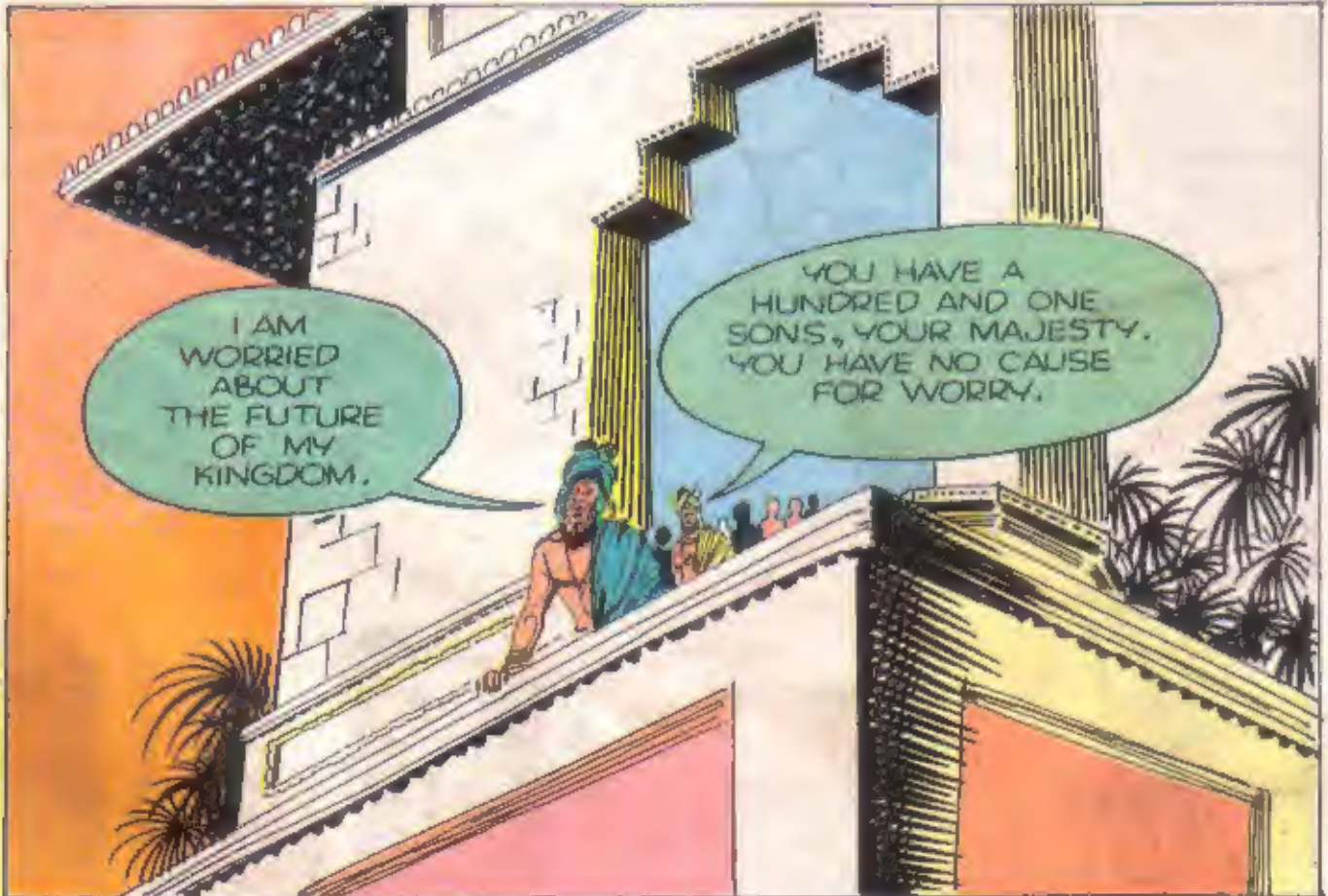


IT WILL  
MAKE HIM  
MORE  
ARROGANT.





BUT THEY WERE UNHAPPIER STILL, WHEN THE KING RECALLED ASHOKA FROM TAXILA.





THAT IS  
EXACTLY  
WHAT  
WORRIES ME.  
ASHOKA IS  
RUTHLESS.  
HE MAY  
FIGHT  
WITH HIS  
BROTHERS  
FOR THE  
THRONE.



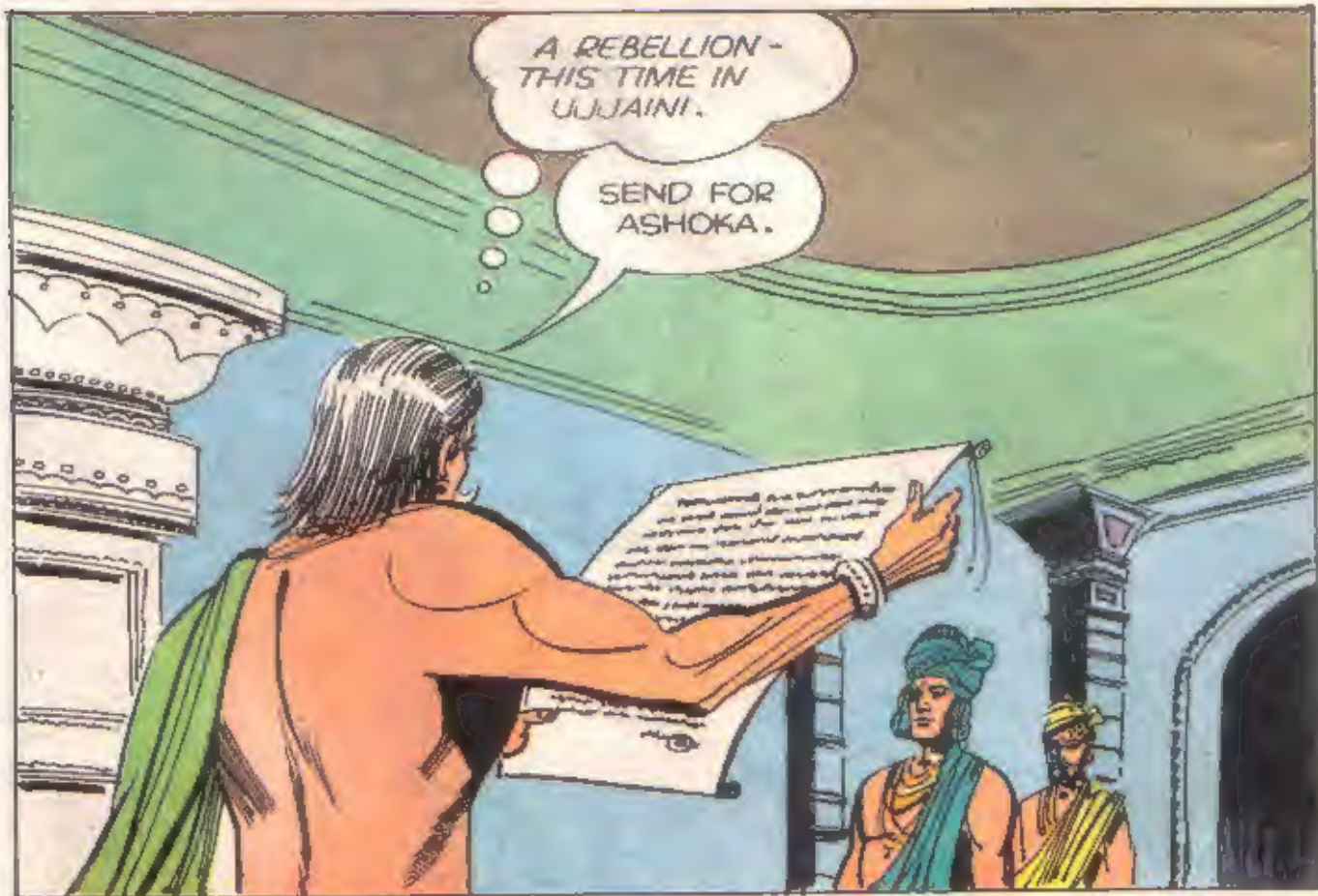
JUST THEN-

THERE  
IS A  
MESSENGER  
FROM  
UJJAINI,  
YOUR  
MAJESTY.

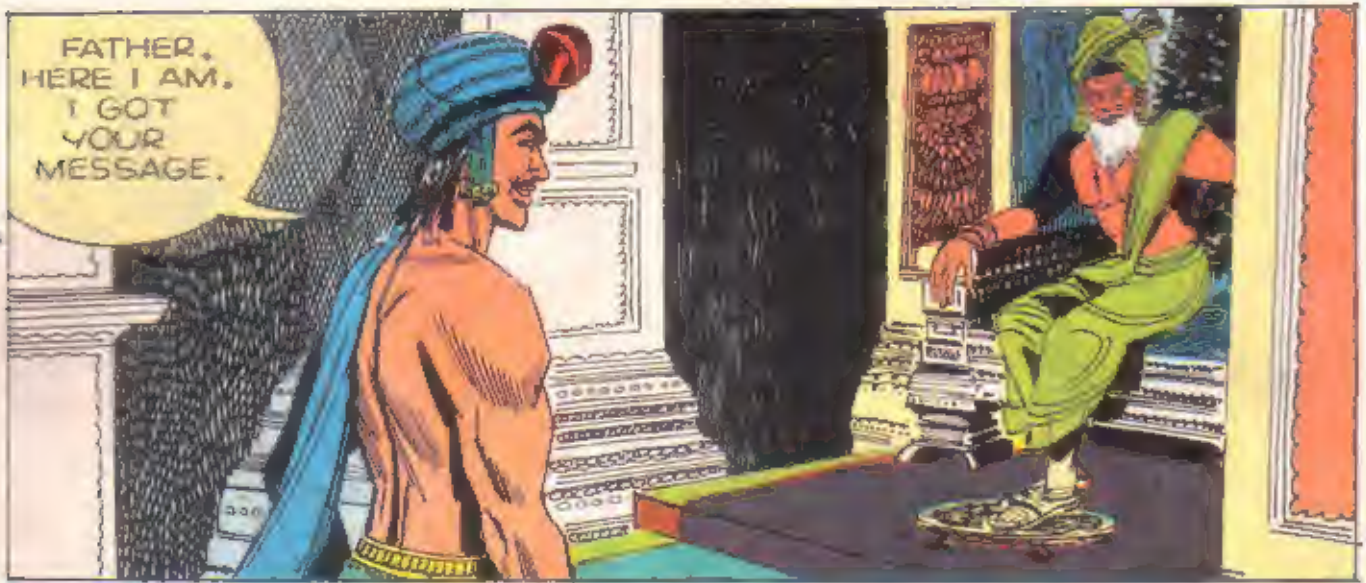


A REBELLION -  
THIS TIME IN  
UJJAINI.

SEND FOR  
ASHOKA.

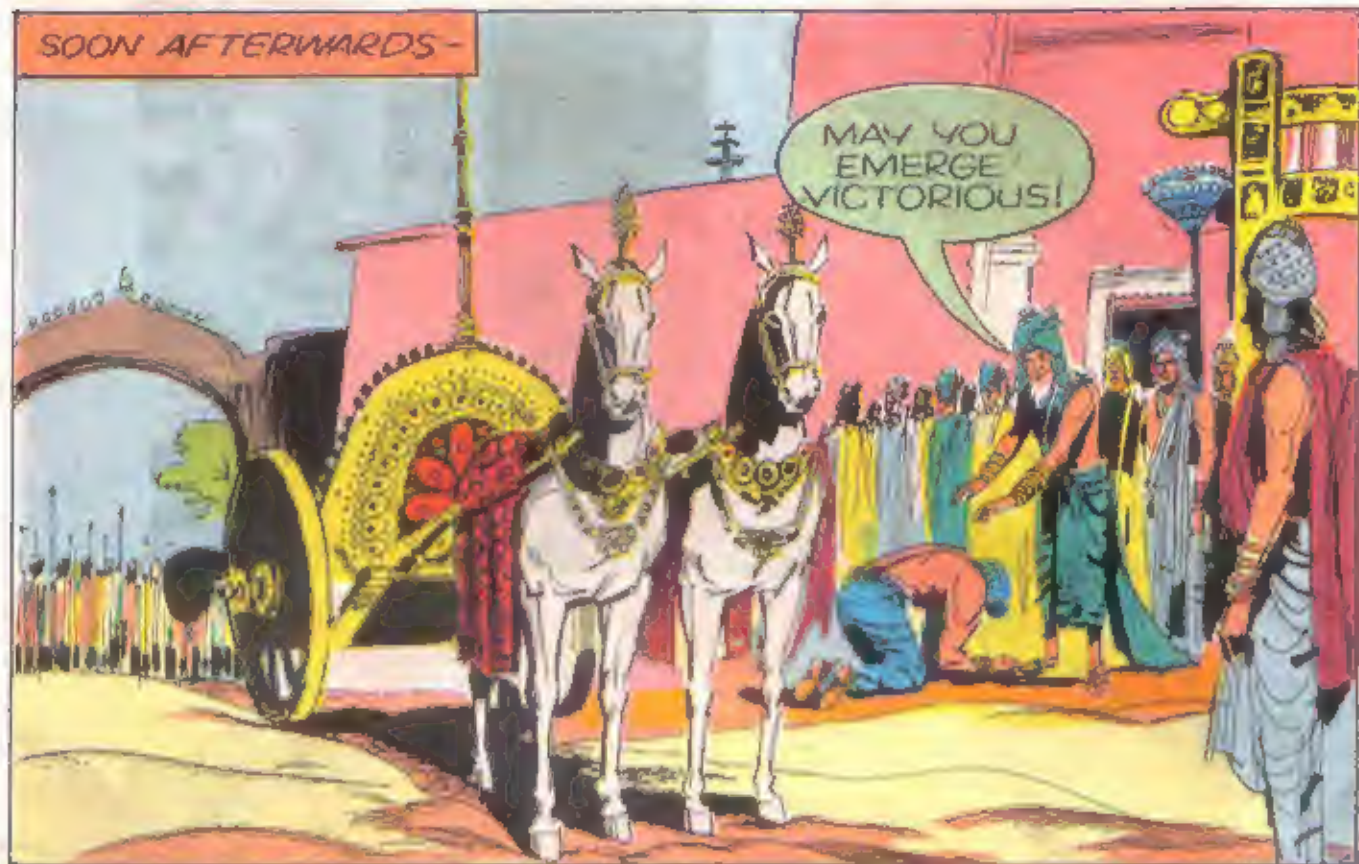








SOON AFTERWARDS -



ASHOKA MARCHED TOWARDS UJJAINI. A GREATER PART OF THE JOURNEY WAS ON HORSEBACK.







ASHOKA WAS CHARMED BY THE BEAUTY OF THE LEADER  
OF THE GROUP.









ASHOKA'S MESSENGER SOON RETURNED.

SIR! SHE IS  
THE DAUGHTER  
OF A REPUTED  
SHRESHTHI'S  
FAMILY.

TELL THE  
SHRESHTHI!  
I WANT TO  
MEET HIM.

MERCHANT

LATER -

SHRESHTHI, IF  
YOU PLEASE.

SIR,  
IS THERE  
ANYTHING  
YOU WANT  
ME TO  
DO FOR  
YOU?

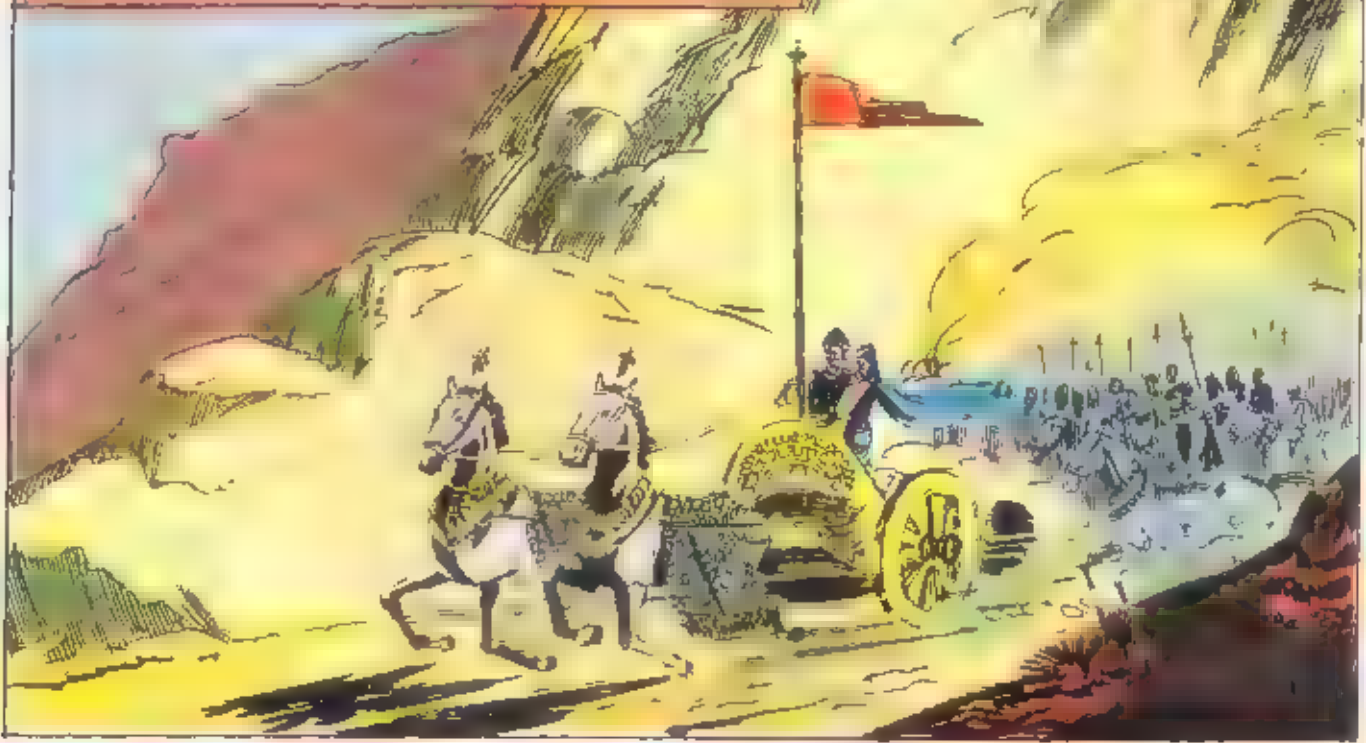
I'VE NEVER  
SEEN OUR  
PRINCE  
HESITATE  
THUS

I...YES. I WANT  
THE HAND OF  
YOUR DAUGHTER  
IN MARRIAGE.

I AM  
HONOURED,  
SIR.



AFTER A QUICK WEDDING, HE PROCEEDED  
TOWARDS UJAINI ALONG WITH VIDISHA.



ASHOKA, A GREAT WARRIOR, IN NO TIME  
ROUTED THE REBELS.



THE REBELS LAID DOWN  
THEIR ARMS





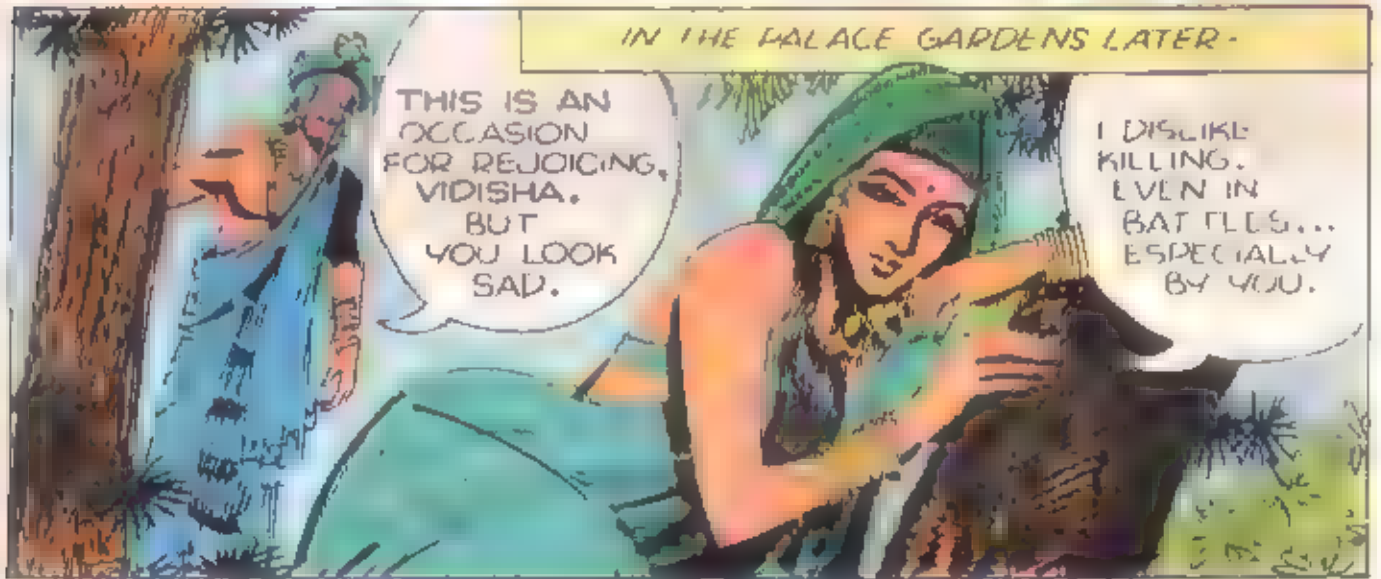
PEOPLE OF THE CITY GAVE ASHOKA A GRAND WELCOME.



IN THE PALACE GARDENS LATER -

THIS IS AN  
OCCASION  
FOR REJOICING,  
VIDISHA.  
BUT  
YOU LOOK  
SAD.

I DISLIKE  
KILLING.  
EVEN IN  
BATTLES...  
ESPECIALLY  
BY YOU.



THAT'S SILLY,  
YOU SAY IT,  
BECAUSE  
YOU ARE A  
BUDDHIST.  
I AM NOT.



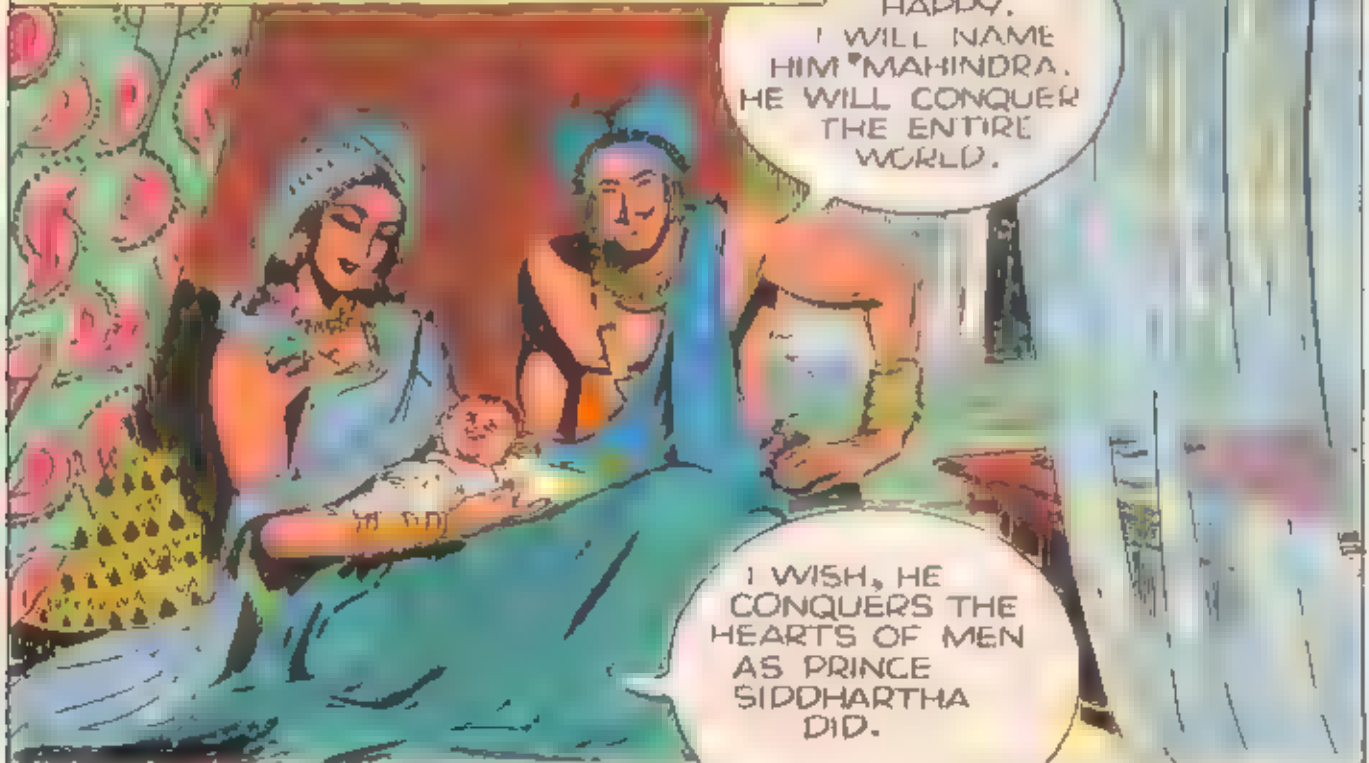




I AM A  
KSHATRIYA  
KING.  
MY DUTY  
ENJOINS  
KILLING  
IF NEED  
BE.

WHAT ABOUT  
BIMBISARA?  
HE TOO WAS  
A KING.  
HE FOUND  
PEACE IN THE  
TEACHINGS  
OF BUDDHA.

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ASHOKA AND  
VIDISHA PERSISTED. MONTHS LATER, WHEN  
VIDISHA GAVE BIRTH TO A SON -



A SON!  
I AM VERY  
HAPPY.  
I WILL NAME  
HIM \*MAHINDRA.  
HE WILL CONQUER  
THE ENTIRE  
WORLD.

I WISH, HE  
CONQUERS THE  
HEARTS OF MEN  
AS PRINCE  
SIDDHARTHA  
DID.

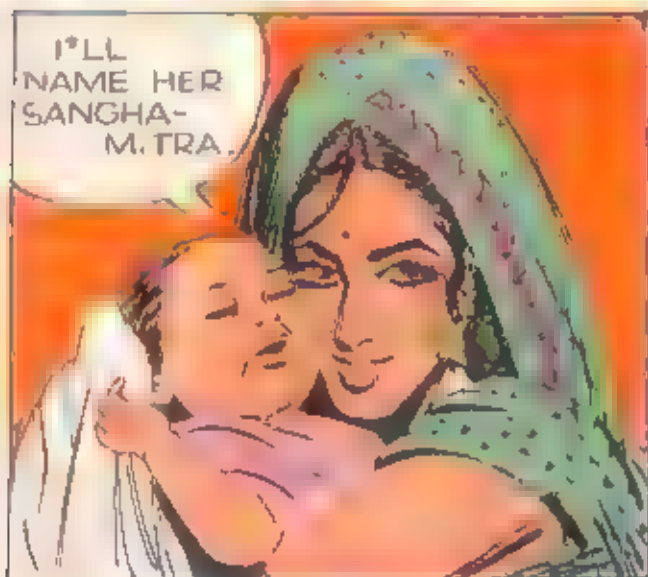
\*MAHI = WORLD



TWO MONTHS LATER, VIDISHA GAVE BIRTH TO A DAUGHTER.

LORD!  
THIS TIME,  
LET ME  
CHOOSE THE  
NAME.

AS  
YOU  
WISH.



I'LL  
NAME HER  
SANGHA-  
M. TRA.



I'LL  
NAME HER  
SANGHA-  
M. TRA.

ONE DAY, A MESSENGER CAME FROM PAATALIDUTRA.

HIS MAJESTY HAS  
NOT BEEN KEEPING  
GOOD HEALTH. PLEASE  
RETURN TO  
PAATALIDUTRA  
IMMEDIATELY.





ASHOKA HAD HURRIED  
CONSULTATIONS WITH  
VIDISHA

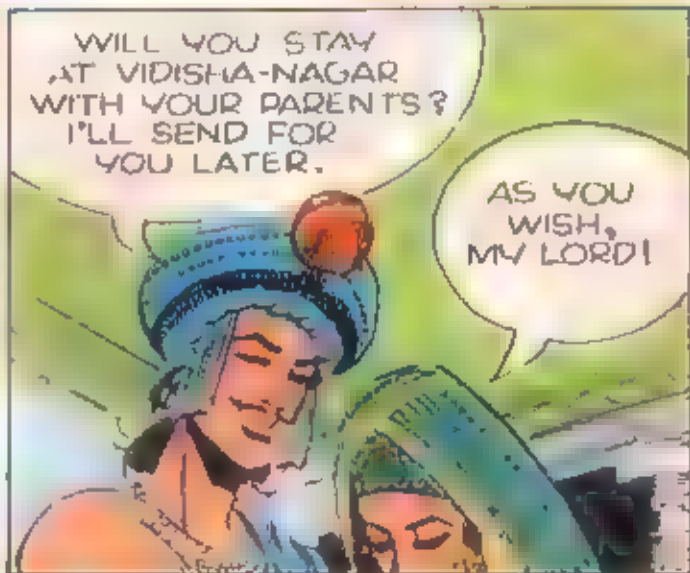
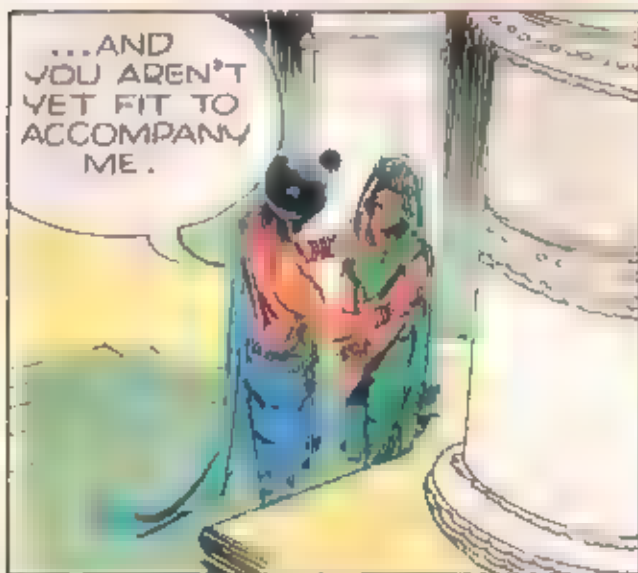
I HAVE RECEIVED  
A MESSAGE FROM  
THE CHIEF MINISTER.  
MY FATHER IS ILL.  
I HAVE TO RUSH TO  
PATALIPUTRA...



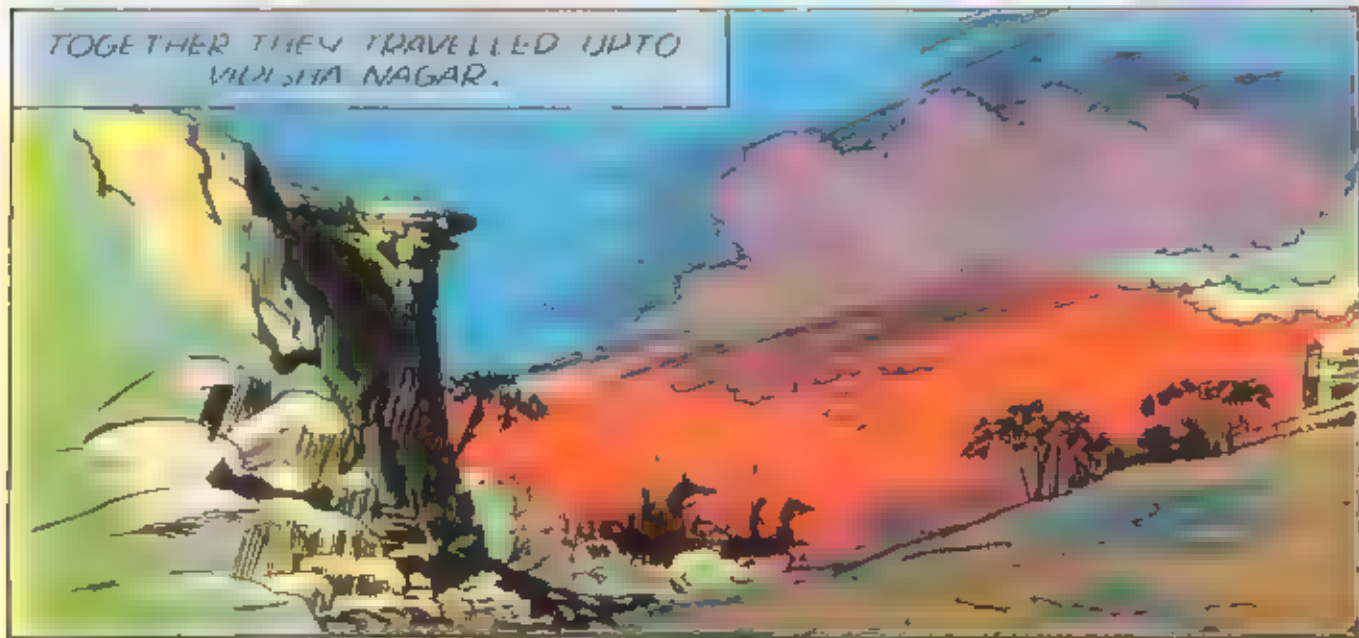
...AND  
YOU AREN'T  
YET FIT TO  
ACCOMPANY  
ME.

WILL YOU STAY  
AT VIDISHA-NAGAR  
WITH YOUR PARENTS?  
I'LL SEND FOR  
YOU LATER.

AS YOU  
WISH,  
MY LORD!



TOGETHER THEY TRAVELLED UPTO  
VIDISHA NAGAR.









AT DATALIDUTRA, ASHOKA WAS RECEIVED BY THE CHIEF MINISTER.

PRINCE!  
YOUR FATHER  
IS NO MORE.  
AND YOUR  
BROTHERS ARE  
FIGHTING  
AMONGST  
THEMSELVES  
FOR THE  
THRONE.

THE THRONE!  
IT IS MINE!  
I HAVE EARNED  
THE RIGHT TO  
IT.

ASHOKA HEARD ALL ABOUT THE THRONE  
HE HAD MADE TO HIMSELF





ASHOKA WAS RUTHLESS IN KILLING ALL THOSE THAT CHALLENGED HIS RIGHT TO THE THRONE. SUMANADEVI, WIFE OF ONE OF HIS BROTHERS, WAS EXPECTING A BABY AT THE TIME.

DO YOU SUGGEST THAT I RUN AWAY FROM HERE? BUT WHERE CAN I GO?

PRINCESS! I FEAR FOR THE LIFE OF THE UNBORN CHILD.



I CAN SHOW YOU A SECRET DOOR, YOU CAN ESCAPE INTO THE WOODS.



ESCAPING FROM THE PALACE, SUMANADEVI WANDERED IN THE FOREST.





AN OLD MAN, WHO WAS PASSING BY,  
TOOK PITY ON HER.

IF YOU COME  
WITH ME TO  
MY VILLAGE,  
I WILL ARRANGE  
FOR YOUR  
STAY.

SHE ACCOMPANIED HIM, WHILE  
THEY WERE ON THEIR WAY -

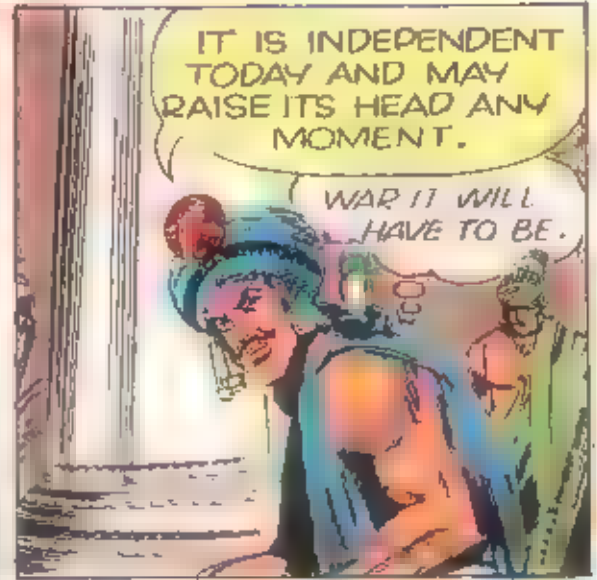
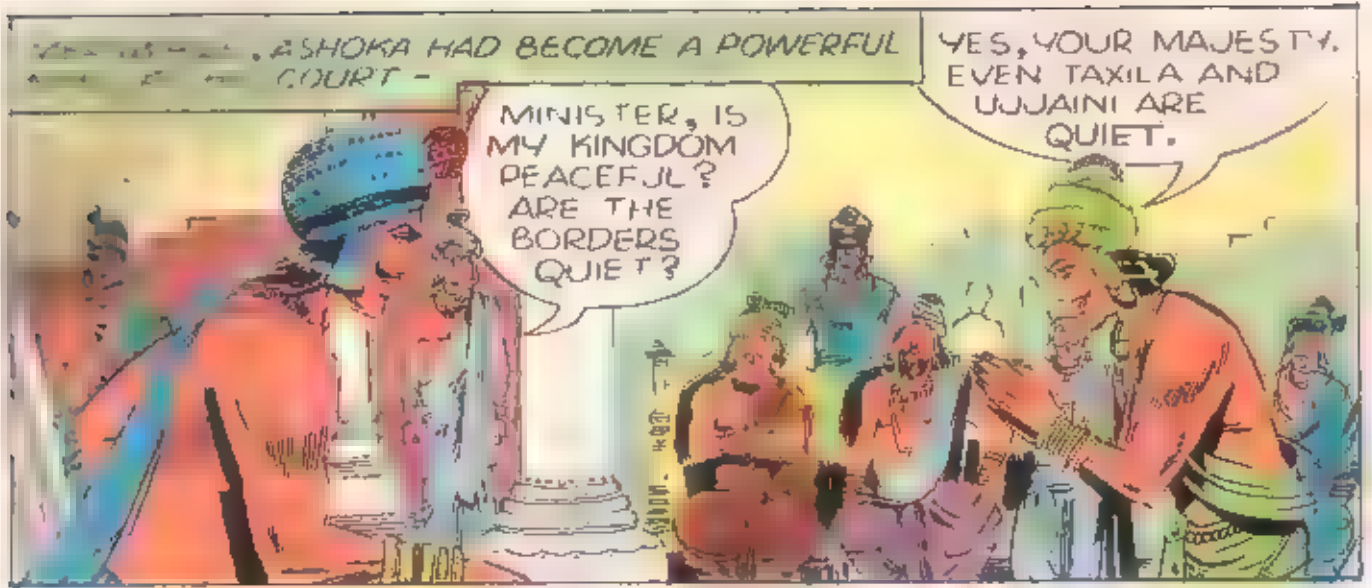
NO!  
I CANNOT  
WALK ANY  
FARTHER.

DON'T WORRY,  
DAUGHTER!  
MY HOME IS  
CLOSE BY.  
I'LL FETCH MY  
WIFE, YOU  
REST UNDER  
THIS  
NIGRODHA  
TREE.

IT WAS UNDER THAT NIGRODHA TREE  
THAT A BOY WAS BORN TO SUMANADEVI.

LET'S  
CALL HIM  
NIGRODHA  
KUMAR.

NIGRODHA KUMAR GREW UP  
IN THAT VILLAGE AND  
BECAME A MONK AT A VERY  
TENDER AGE.





ASHOKA'S  
ARMY  
INVADED  
KALINGA.



THE SOLDIERS OF KALINGA  
FOUGHT BRAVELY.



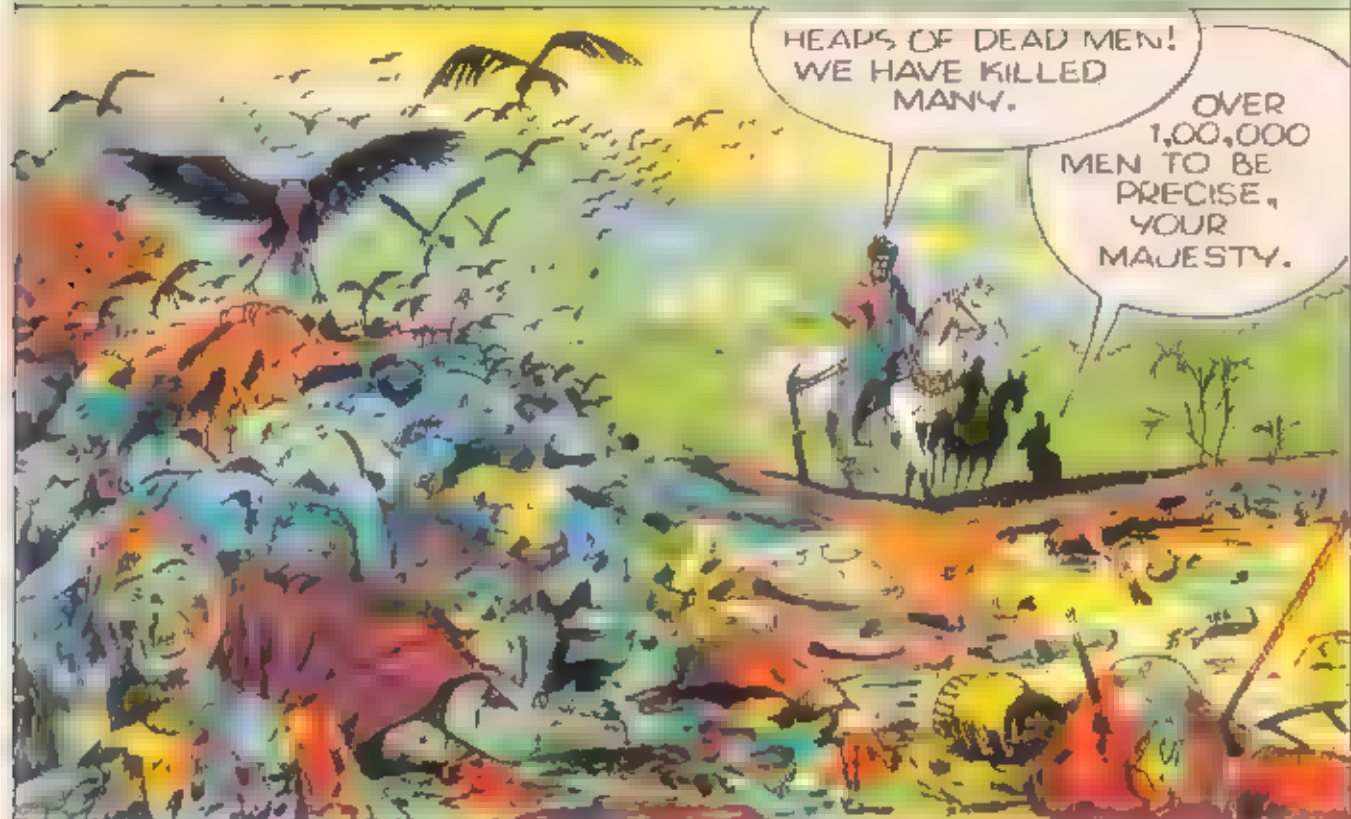
AT LAST -

WE HAVE WON.  
KALINGA IS  
OURS.

I  
SHALL  
VISIT  
KALINGA.



AS HE PROCEEDED, HE SAW HORRIBLE SIGHTS.



HEADS OF DEAD MEN!  
WE HAVE KILLED  
MANY.

OVER  
1,00,000  
MEN TO BE  
PRECISE,  
YOUR  
MAJESTY.



WE HAVE  
CAPTURED  
1,50,000  
MEN,  
YOUR  
MAJESTY.

MERCY!  
WE BEG FOR  
MERCY!



IT LOOKS  
DESOLATE  
HERE.

LAKHS HAVE  
DIED, YOUR  
MAJESTY.



HE SAW THE SUFFERINGS OF THE PEOPLE.



OH! NO!

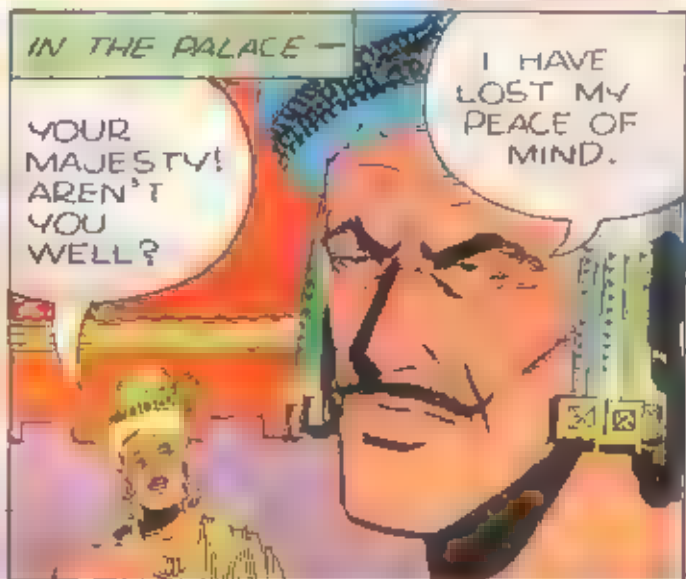
LET'S  
RETURN.



IN THE PALACE —

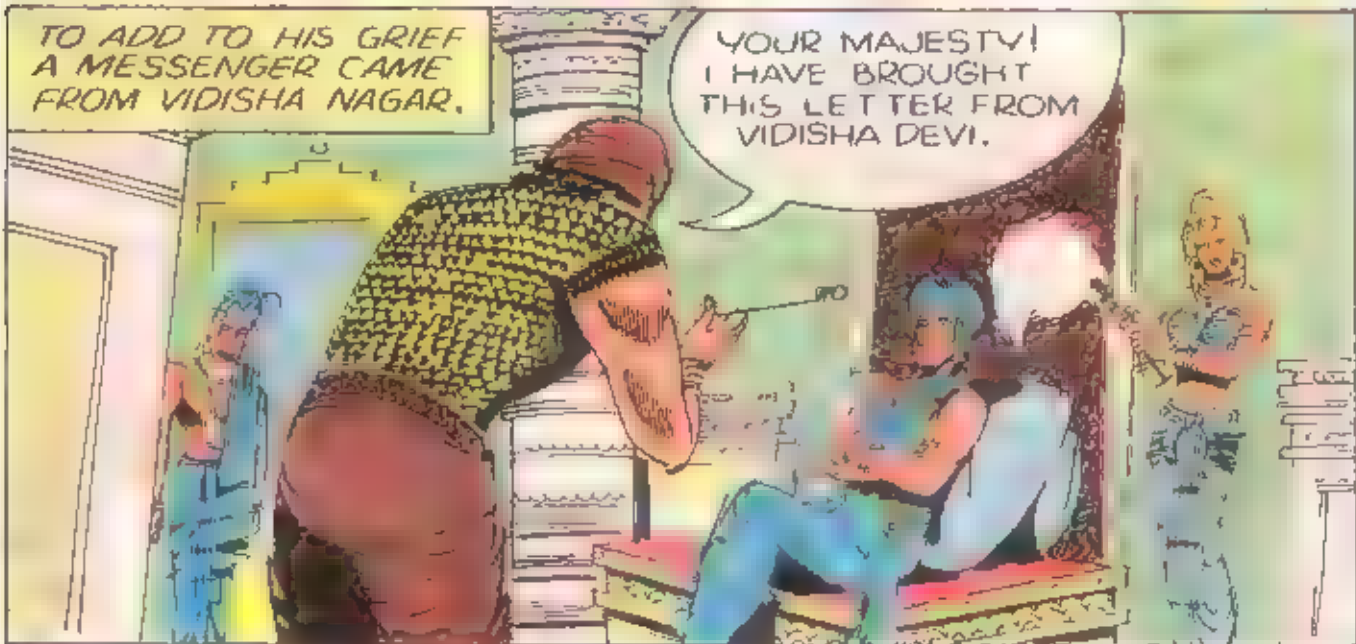
YOUR  
MAJESTY!  
AREN'T  
YOU  
WELL?

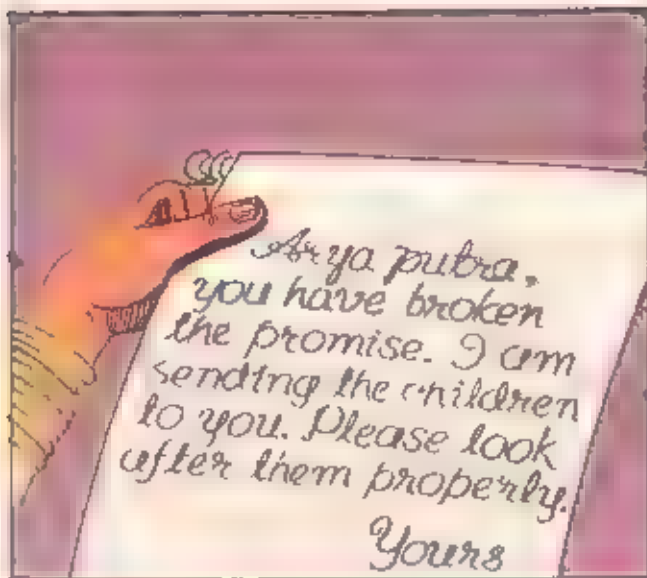
I HAVE  
LOST MY  
PEACE OF  
MIND.



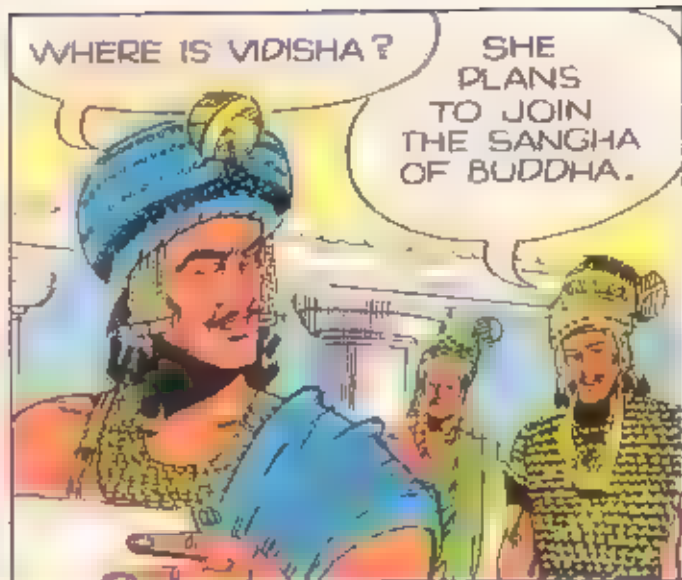
TO ADD TO HIS GRIEF  
A MESSENGER CAME  
FROM VIDISHA NAGAR.

YOUR MAJESTY!  
I HAVE BROUGHT  
THIS LETTER FROM  
VIDISHA DEVI.





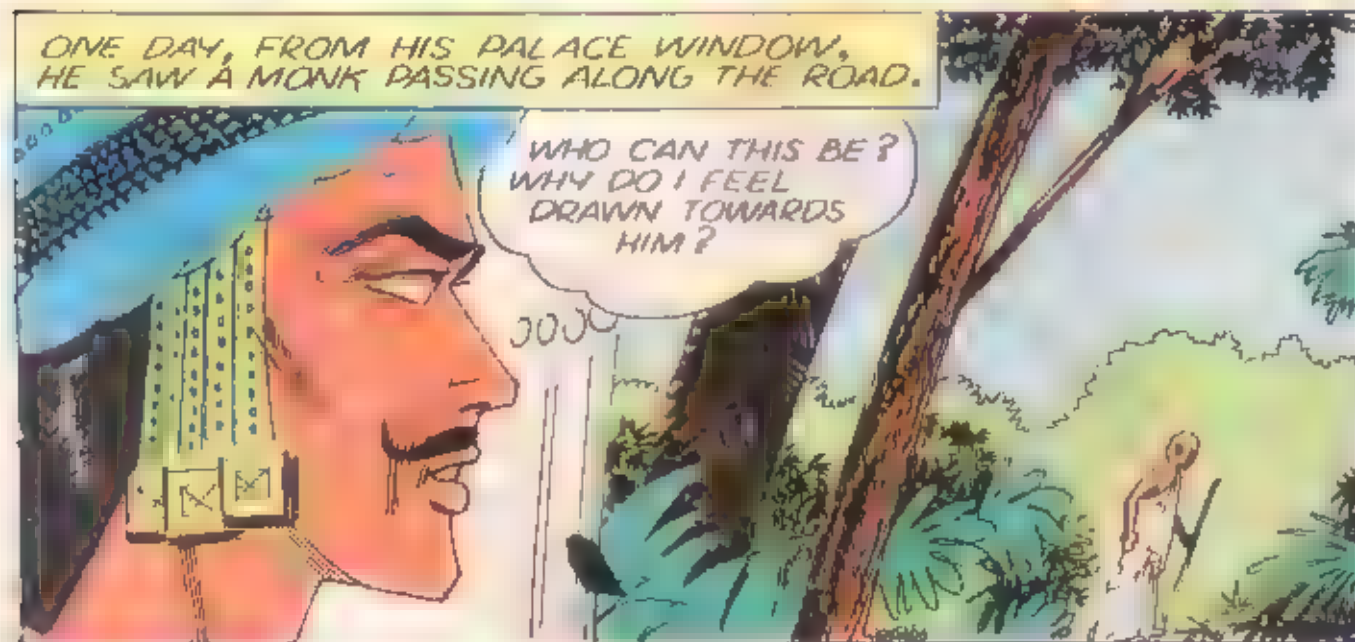
Arya putra,  
you have broken  
the promise. I am  
sending the children  
to you. Please look  
after them properly.  
Yours



WHERE IS VIDISHA?

SHE  
PLANS  
TO JOIN  
THE SANGHA  
OF BUDDHA.

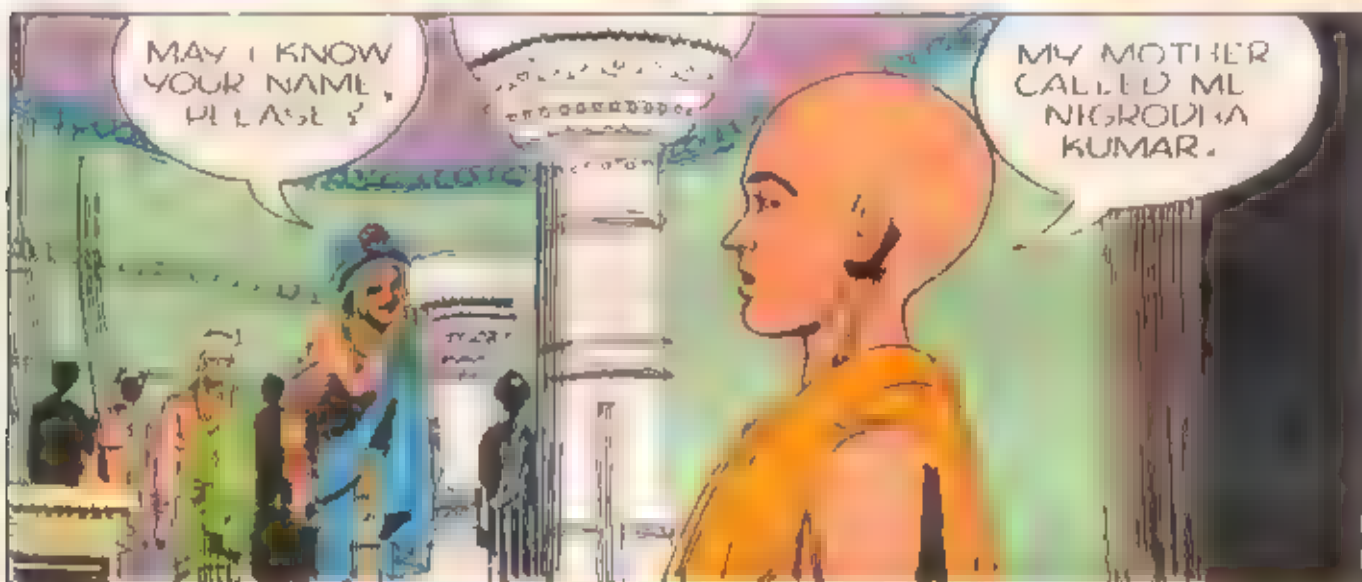
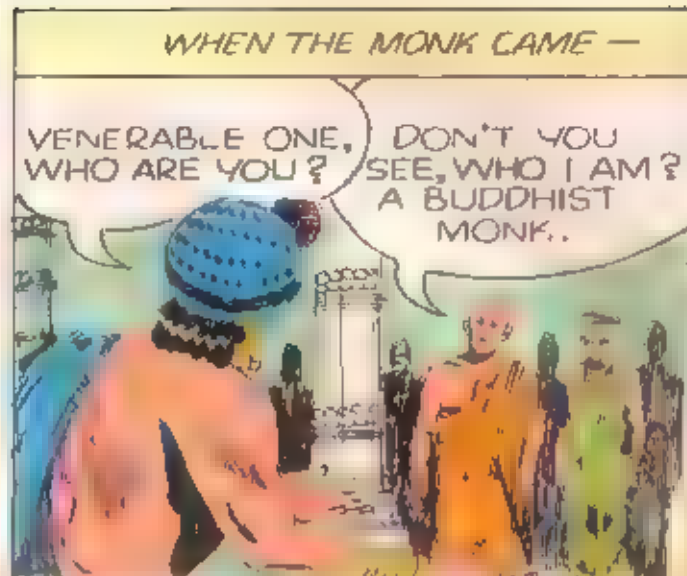
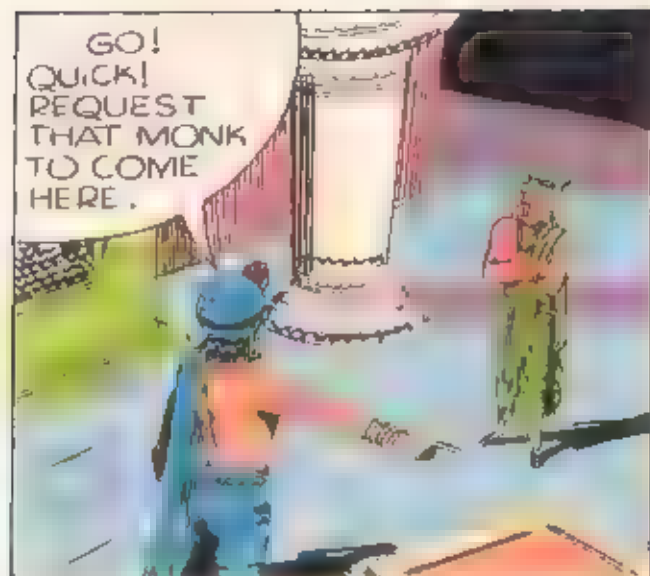
...HUKA DREW SOME COMFORT  
FROM THE PRESENCE OF HIS  
CHILDREN BUT HE CONTINUED  
TO THINK ABOUT THE KING.



ONE DAY, FROM HIS PALACE WINDOW,  
HE SAW A MONK PASSING ALONG THE ROAD.

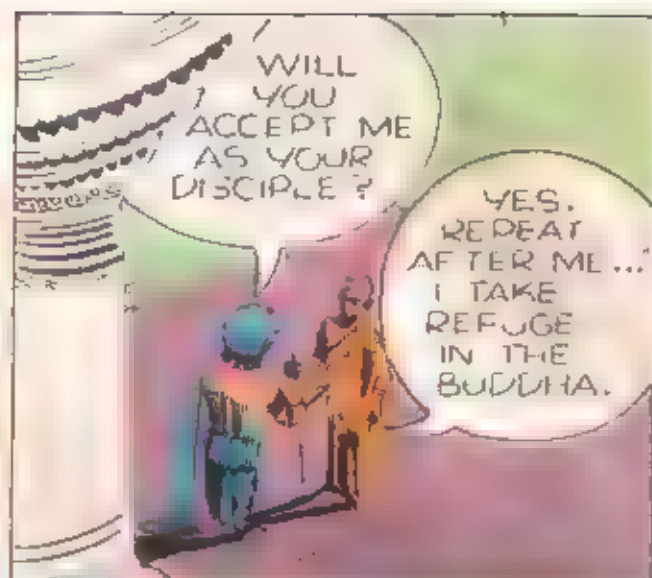
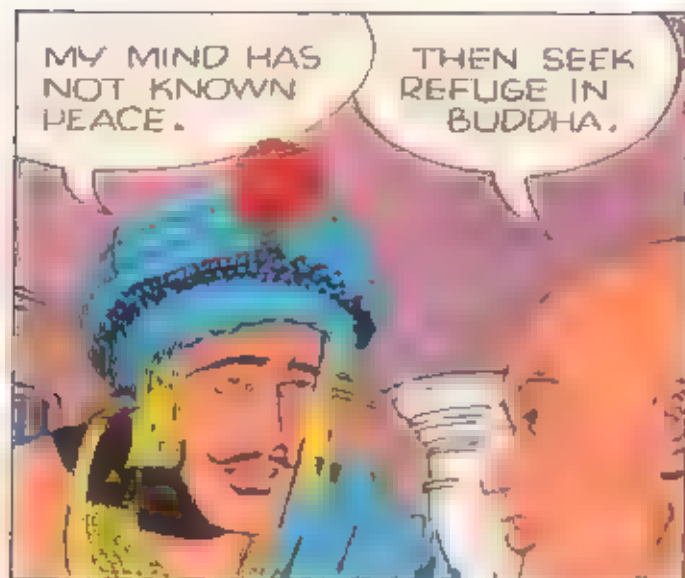
WHO CAN THIS BE?  
WHY DO I FEEL  
DRAWN TOWARDS  
HIM?

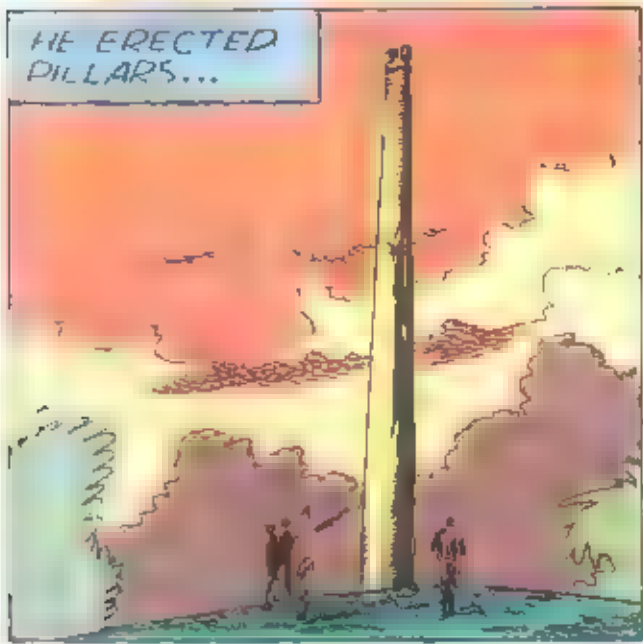




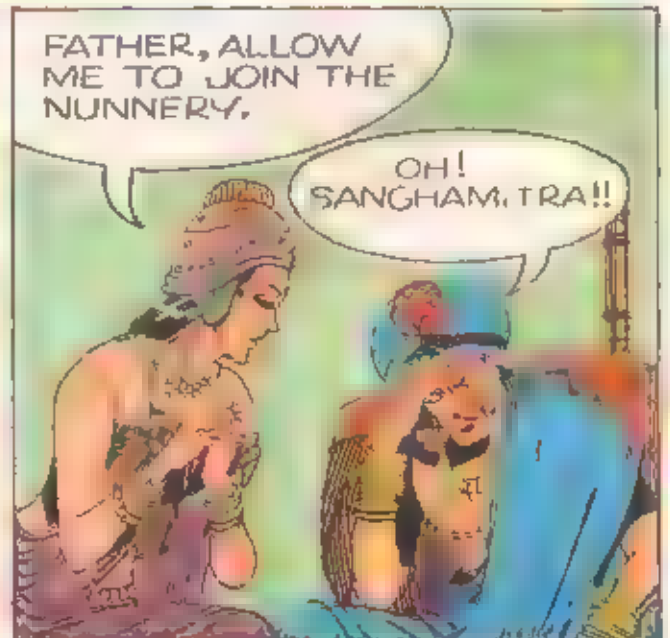
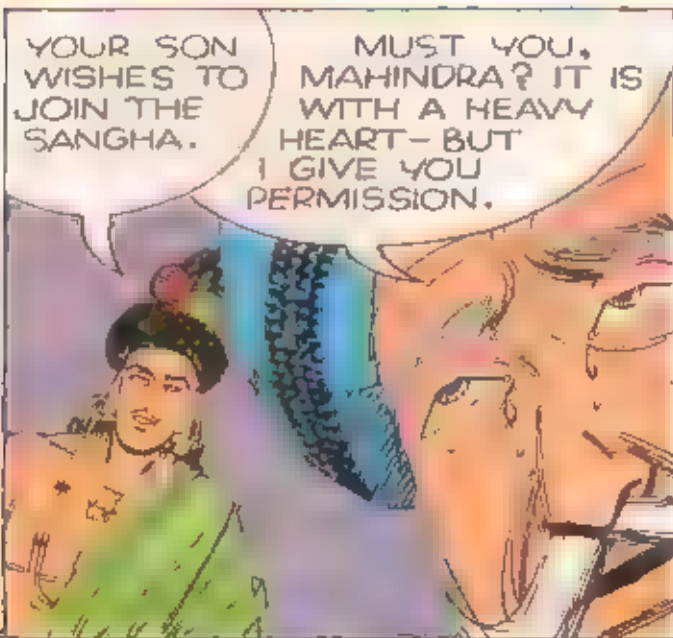
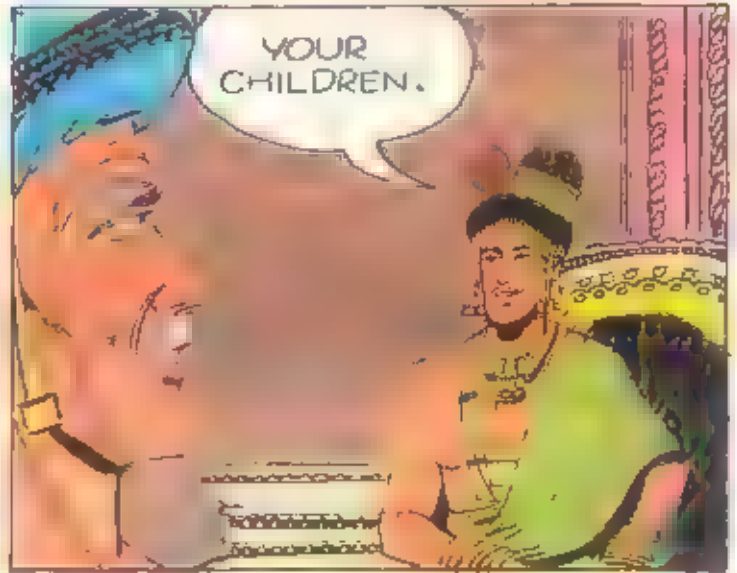


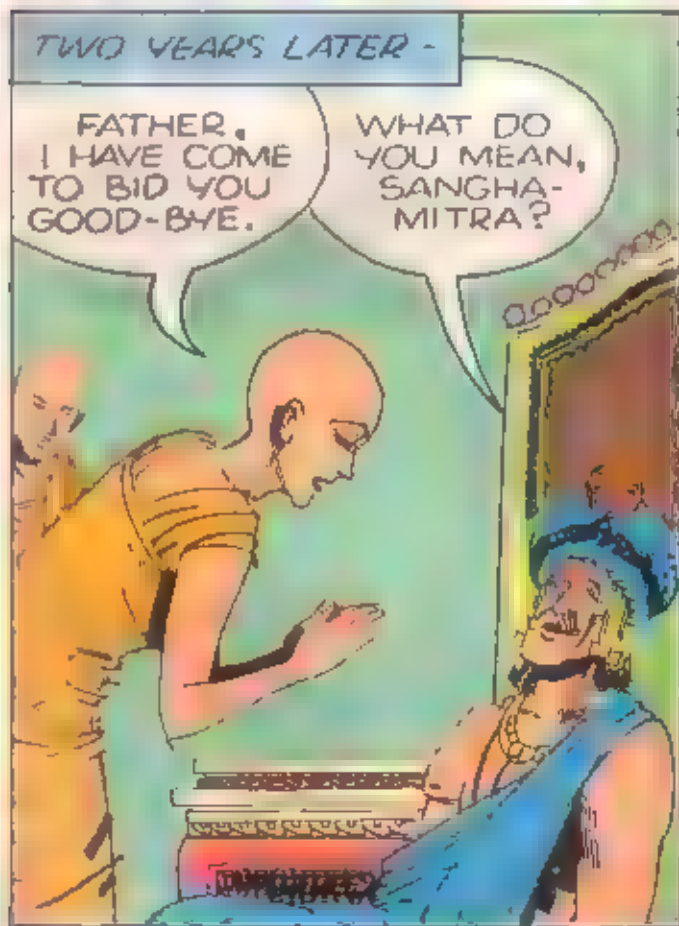
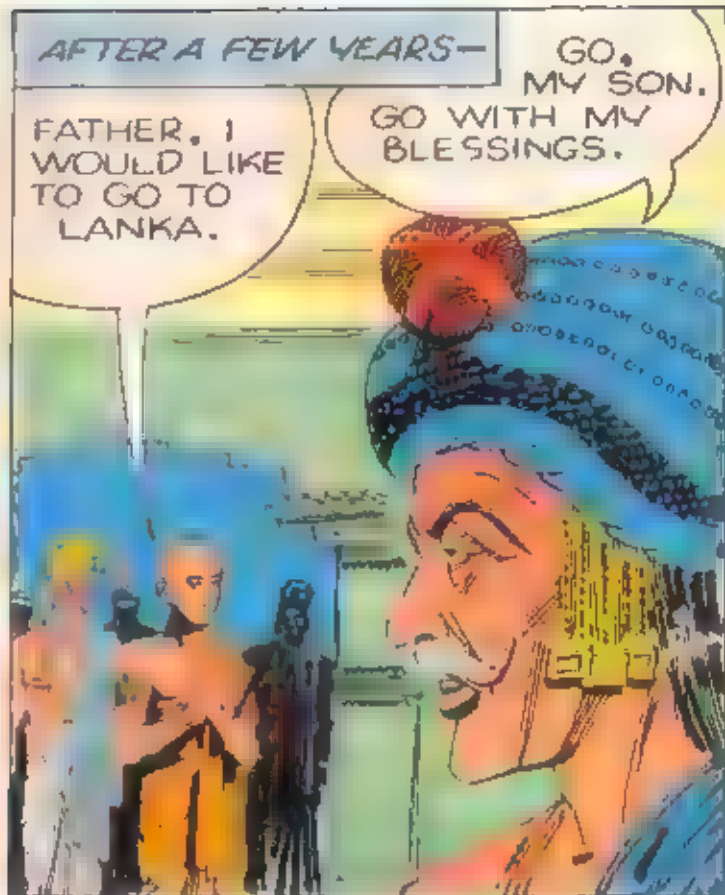




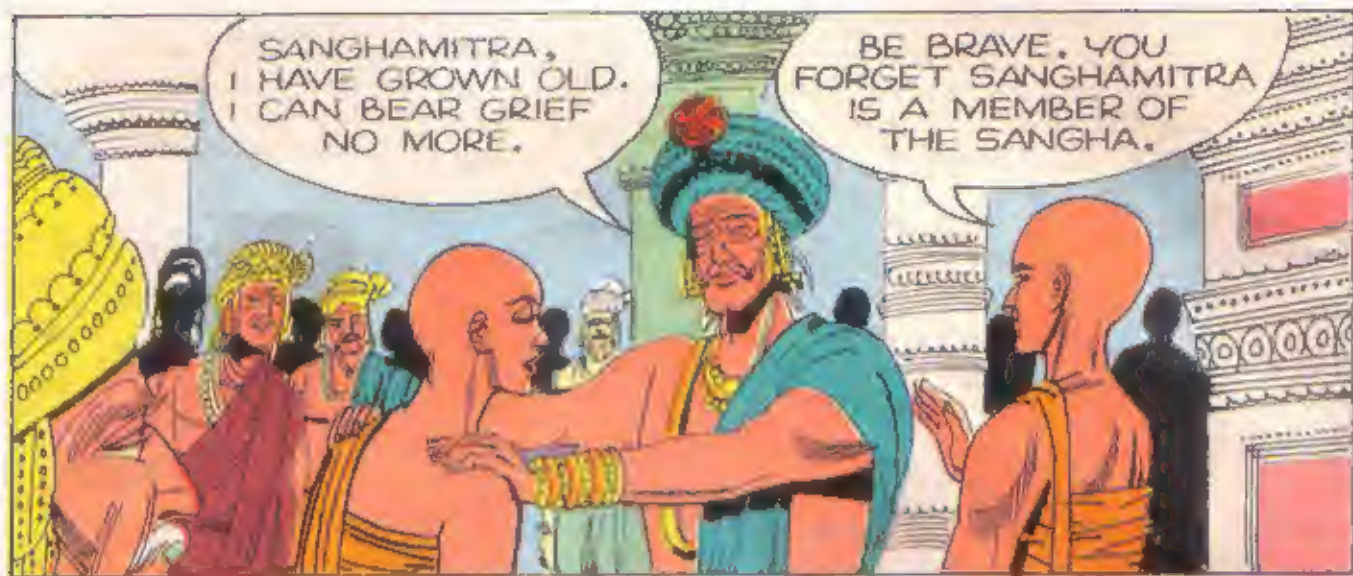


















THE FIVE PRINCIPLES OF CO-EXISTENCE, WHICH HE PROPAGATED, ARE STILL RESPECTED THE WORLD OVER. THE ASHOKA PILLAR AT SARNATH REMINDS US EVEN TILL THIS DAY OF HIS GREATNESS. THE "DHARMA CHAKRA" ON THE ASHOKA PILLAR ADORNS OUR NATIONAL FLAG.





*Preservation*